

IN THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims

Claims 1-23 (canceled).

Claim 24 (currently amended): A lower terminal end-piece for a fuel assembly of a pressurized water nuclear reactor, the assembly comprising fuel rods having a length and a diameter, and a skeleton for supporting the fuel rods, the fuel rods extending in a longitudinal direction and being arranged at nodes of a substantially regular network, the fuel rods having outer claddings closed by an upper and a lower plug, the support skeleton comprising an upper terminal end-piece and the lower terminal end-piece, and guide tubes that connect the upper and lower terminal end-pieces, the fuel rods being arranged longitudinally between the upper and lower terminal end-pieces, the lower terminal end-piece comprising:

a top side and a bottom side, the top side for facing the fuel rods and the bottom side being opposite the top side;

noses for orientating flow of a coolant fluid of the reactor along lower ends of the fuel rods, the noses being arranged in the nodes of the substantially regular network in order to be positioned in a longitudinal continuation of at least a majority ~~some~~ of the fuel rods ~~and/or at least some of the guide tubes~~ of the support skeleton.

wherein the noses project from the bottom side of the lower terminal end-piece and converge to be narrower than the diameter of the fuel rods in a direction that is orientated from the top side of the lower terminal end-piece towards the bottom side of the lower terminal end-piece.

Claim 25 (canceled).

Claim 26 (currently amended): The lower terminal end-piece according to claim 24, wherein at least some of the noses belong to members for fixing ~~at least one of the~~ lower terminal end-piece[[s]] to one of the guide tubes of the support skeleton and fuel rods.

Claim 27 (currently amended): The lower terminal end-piece according to claim 26, wherein the fixing members are screws.

Claim 28 (currently amended): The lower terminal end-piece according to claim 24 further comprising:

an arrangement for laterally maintaining the lower ends of the fuel rods, wherein the arrangement is arranged in the nodes of the substantially regular network.

Claim 29 (withdrawn – currently amended): The lower terminal end-piece according to claim 28, wherein the maintaining arrangement further comprises housings for receiving the lower ends of the fuel rods.

Claim 30 (currently amended): The lower terminal end-piece according to claim 28, wherein the maintaining arrangement has an arrangement for longitudinally securing the lower ends of the fuel rods relative to the lower terminal end-piece.

Claim 31 (currently amended): The lower terminal end-piece according to claim 30, wherein the lower terminal end-piece comprises two components for clamping between them the lower ends of the fuel rods.

Claim 32 (currently amended): The lower terminal end-piece according to claim 24, wherein the lower terminal end-piece comprises an anti-debris filter.

Claim 33 (currently amended): The lower terminal end-piece according to claim 31, wherein one of the components comprises an anti-debris filter.

Claim 34 (canceled).

Claim 35 (currently amended): The lower terminal end-piece according to claim 24, wherein the lower terminal end-piece comprises feet for support on a lower plate of the nuclear reactor core.

Claim 36 (currently amended): A fuel assembly for a pressurized water nuclear reactor, the assembly comprising:

fuel rods, the fuel rods having an outer cladding and an upper and a lower plug and having a length and a diameter; and

a skeleton for supporting fuel rods, the fuel rods extending in a longitudinal direction and being arranged at nodes of a substantially regular network, the support skeleton comprising an upper terminal end-piece and a lower terminal end-piece, and guide tubes that connect the upper and lower terminal end-pieces, the fuel rods being arranged longitudinally between the upper and lower terminal end-pieces, wherein the lower terminal end-piece has a top side and a bottom side, the top side facing the fuel rods and the bottom side being opposite the top side and has noses for orientating flow of a coolant fluid of the reactor along lower ends of the fuel rods, the noses being arranged in the nodes of the substantially regular network in order to be positioned in a longitudinal continuation of at least a majority ~~some~~ of the fuel rods ~~and/or at least some of the guide tubes~~ of the support skeleton,

wherein the noses project from the bottom side of the lower terminal end-piece and converge to be narrower than the diameter of the fuel rods in a direction that is orientated from the top side of the lower terminal end-piece towards the bottom side of the lower terminal end-piece.

Claim 37 (currently amended): The assembly according to claim 36, wherein ~~at least one of~~ the lower terminal end-piece[[s]] comprises an arrangement for laterally maintaining lower ends of the fuel rods, wherein the arrangement is configured in nodes of the substantially regular network.

Claim 38 (withdrawn): The assembly according to claim 37, wherein the arrangement comprises housings that receive the lower ends of the fuel rods.

Claim 39 (currently amended): The assembly according to claim 37, wherein the maintaining arrangement is an arrangement for longitudinally securing the lower ends of the fuel rods relative to the lower terminal end-piece[[s]].

Claim 40 (currently amended): The assembly according to claim 39, wherein the lower terminal end-piece comprises two components that clamp between them the lower ends of the fuel rods.

Claim 41 (withdrawn – currently amended): The assembly according to claim 40, wherein the longitudinal securing arrangement comprises projections that are provided on the lower terminal end-piece and rings that are provided at the lower ends of the fuel rods and that are fitted to the projections.

Claim 42 (withdrawn): The assembly according to claim 41, wherein that the rings comprise relief portions for abutment against one of the components.

Claim 43 (withdrawn): The assembly according to claim 38, wherein the lower ends of the fuel rods comprise widened feet that are clamped between the two components.

Claim 44 (withdrawn – currently amended): The assembly according to claim 37, wherein the lower ends of the fuel rods are expansion-rolled on the lower terminal end-piece.

Claim 45 (withdrawn – currently amended): The assembly according to claim 39, wherein the longitudinal securing arrangement comprises screws that abut the lower terminal end-piece and that are engaged in the lower ends of the fuel rods.

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Claim 46 (withdrawn): The assembly according to claim 39, wherein the longitudinal securing arrangement secured by snap-fitting.

Claim 47 (previously presented): The assembly according to claim 36 wherein the noses converge to a point.

Claim 48 (currently amended): The lower terminal end-piece according to claim 24 wherein the noses converge to a point.